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NGOs show true colours through protest: Lim

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POLITICALLY-motivated non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have shown their true colours when they protested against a proposal for a legally-binding international forest convention.

Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said as an NGO, they should have supported the idea of having such a convention as it will help to further protect world forests.

"I was shocked to find that there are NGOs who are against this idea (convention of forest)," he told reporters after opening an international tropical wood conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Lim was referring to his experience when he attended the Fifth Session of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in New York last April.

At the April conference, several NGOs voiced their disapproval towards Malaysia's move supporting for the establishment of a legally-binding forest convention. Nations that supported the proposal include 15 European Union countries, Canada and Indonesia, while among those who were against the idea were the US, Brazil and some developing nations.

Dr Lim said the NGOs had even wrote to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad seeking clarification as to why Malaysia wants such a convention to be established.

The minister noted that he will reply to the letter and ask them why they are against the idea of having a forest convention.

"The NGOs' actions clearly showed that they are only interested in protecting the temperate timber-based industries. All these are trade issues hiding under environmental issues. That is why they pressure us using environmental issues," he added.

He also said Malaysia is in a position to articulate on behalf of Third World countries and that is why it wants to have a legally-binding convention on forests.

"But this idea was rejected by the NGOs which claimed that it would not be a good agreement because it was hastily resolved and was only promoted by timber-trading nations," he added.

Dr Lim said such double-standard practices have even spread to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in disbursing their respective loans.

"These two world bodies, which are controlled by donor countries, have attached environmental clauses to their loans. They are not issuing loans to nations that clear their forests for development," he added.

Dr Lim said developed countries, previously using protectionist policies to protect their domestic markets, are now using environmental, health and social issues for their own interests.

"They are now trying to use international fora like the International Labour Organisation and World Trade Organisation to their advantage," he added.

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